

English in the worldwide Babel

Social-interest arguments and remarks in the language
our multilingual world shares

Erasmo Barresi

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THE ENVIRONMENT

I spoke to a school friend who didn't respect the Environment. Is he going to modify his behaviour? – The mentioned book is "High Spirits" (Level 3) by Philippa Bowen and Denis Delaney (© Oxford University Press 2009).

Erasmo Have you done the test in the English book?

Joe No, I haven't.

Erasmo I've done it. My result was 1: "your carbon footprint is really small". Shall we do your test now?

Joe OK. Ask me the questions and I'll answer.

Erasmo How do you get to school?

Joe Dad drives me to the bus stop. Then I get a bus.

Erasmo How often do you travel by plane?

Joe Every winter and summer to go on holiday.

Erasmo Do you have a mobile phone?

Joe Yes, I have. Who hasn't?

Erasmo Do you recycle paper, glass and aluminium?

Joe No, I don't. I throw all in the same place.

Erasmo Do you use plastic bags for your shopping?

Joe Yes, I do. I don't want to take a bag from home.

Erasmo That's fine.

Joe Well... can you tell me what my carbon footprint is?

Erasmo Your result is 5: "your carbon footprint is big"!

Joe What does it mean?

Erasmo It means that you do a lot of things which damage the Environment.

Joe And so? What may happen?

Erasmo Every human activity cause emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂). In the past the world's population was little, so there was a little carbon dioxide in the atmosphere; instead since October 2011 it's over seven billion, and more CO₂ is emitted. Too many greenhouse gases in the atmosphere cause global warming. Everyone must have a small carbon footprint.

Joe But I don't want to change my lifestyle. Travel by plane is easier than travel by other transports... mobile phone is necessary... I don't want to walk to school... and to put my rubbish in different places by material... and to take bags from home for my shopping...

Erasmo You're making a big mistake. You don't understand that behaving in this way you're damaging your future children's world. Do it for them!

Joe Well, tell me some rules I should respect.

Erasmo 1: cycle to school in the morning (it's a good alternative to car, and you don't have to walk)
2: go on holiday in our country (you'll know it better and you won't have to travel by plane)
3: use an only charger for all your family's phones (and don't use it when the battery is full)
4: put in a separate bin your recyclable rubbish (use them more times before throwing them)
5: save some money buying only once a re-usable bag (you can take it in your pocket)

One rule for each test's question.

Joe They aren't difficult to respect!

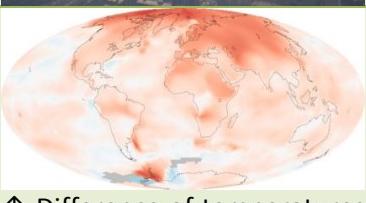
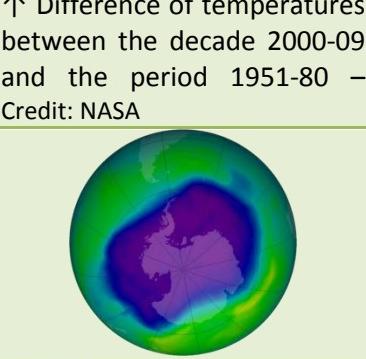
Erasmo Will you respect them from now on?



THE ENVIRONMENT

Let's analyse diverse facets of the same problem: pollution.

The Environment is the natural conditions in which we live. People are part of the environment of the area in which they live, as well as animals, plants and microbes. But people often pollute their environment; organisms' life becomes more difficult and they sometimes become extinct.

	Smog The word <i>smog</i> is the union of <i>smoke</i> and <i>fog</i> . It identifies the burning of coal which has been causing problem in most industrialized cities. ← Smog in New York
 ↑ Difference of temperatures between the decade 2000-09 and the period 1951-80 – Credit: NASA	Greenhouse gases and global warming Greenhouse gases surround our planet and reflect the heat in atmosphere back to Earth. Without them the medium temperature on Earth would be less than 15°C. But if there are too many greenhouse gases, too much heat is reflected and the climate becomes hotter. This occurrence is called global warming. Because of it, hot places may become deserts and polar ice may melt provoking disastrous floods.
	Destruction of the ozone layer CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) are gases used in aerosols, refrigerators, air conditioning systems and packaging materials. Their effect destroys the ozone layer in the stratosphere – from 15 to 50 km height. Ozone is necessary to stop ultraviolet rays. ← The Antarctic ozone hole in 2006 – Credit: NASA
	Acid rain Acid rain is formed when gases and chemicals mix with aqueous vapour in the atmosphere. Plants and fishes die because the water becomes too acid. ← Effect of acid rain on a forest

All these problems are caused by human activity. Every year there are international conferences about sustainable growth. The most important was the 1997 Kyoto United Nation conference. There eighty-four countries signed the Kyoto Protocol, a pact to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2 , the most important greenhouse gas); but some countries, such as the United States, didn't sign it, saying that their economy would be damaged.

Knowing what pollution is, we can make decisions to save our world, influence our friends and our governments; and this is what scientists ask us to do.

There is a saying: **WE DON'T INHERIT THIS EARTH FROM OUR ANCESTORS. WE BORROW IT FROM OUR CHILDREN.**

BRITISH PARLIAMENT AND GOVERNMENT

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy. Like any other country, the State has got three powers: legislative, executive, and judiciary.

The Parliament has got the legislative power. The Head of Parliament is the reigning monarch, now Queen Elizabeth II. The Parliament is made up of two parts: the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The Lords are 788 members: ninety of them are hereditary; the others are life peers appointed by the Queen on advice of the Prime Minister or on advice of the House of Lords Appointments Commission. The Commons are 650 members elected by the people. In the United Kingdom the Queen has not a real political power, she is only a symbol: she "reigns, but does not rule". Today the Queen is Elizabeth II, whose reign started on 6 February 1952. Her sixty-year reign is the second-longest in the United Kingdom.

In Britain there are four major political parties: Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, and Social Democrats. The Prime Minister is the leader of the party who wins the elections. Today the Prime Minister is David Cameron, leader of the Conservative Party, appointed on 11 May 2010 after the elections on 6 May 2010. The first woman to be Prime Minister was Margaret Thatcher, leader of the Conservative Party.

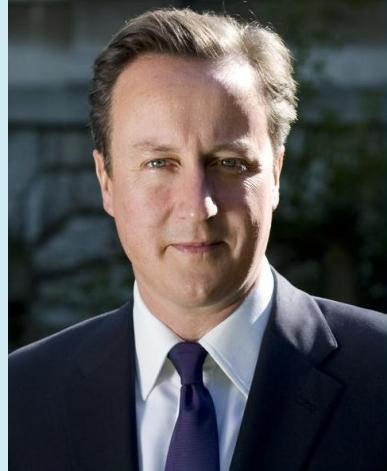


The flag of the United Kingdom is called the "Union flag"



The current Queen of the United Kingdom is Elizabeth II – Credit: NASA

The current Prime Minister of the United Kingdom is David Cameron – The copyright holder of this image (<http://www.number10.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/official-pic-474.jpg>), the British Crown, releases it under the Open Government Licence (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/>)



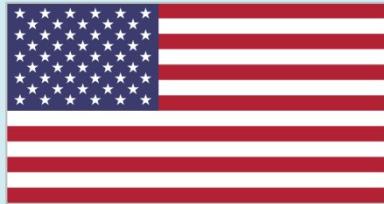
AMERICAN PARLIAMENT AND GOVERNMENT

The United States are a presidential republic. This means that the President is both the Head of State and the Head of Government, so he has a lot of power. The President is elected by the people and his mandate lasts four years. After this period, he can be re-elected, but only twice in succession. The President must be at least thirty-five years old and must be a native-born American. His residence and workplace is the White House, which is located in Washington, District of Columbia. The current President of the United States is Barack Hussein Obama II, who was inaugurated on 20 January 2009 after the elections on 4 November 2008. He is the first African American US President and he was awarded the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize.

The President's decisions become effective only if the Congress decides to approve them. The Congress is the organ that has got the legislative power in the United States and is made up of two parts: the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Representatives are 435 members, whose mandate lasts two years; the Senators are 100 members (two from each federation's State), who are elected every six years.

The President also chooses the members of the Cabinet, who help him in governing the nation. They are responsible of a specific area of Government – for example, there is the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defence, et cetera.

There are two major political parties in the United States: the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. The Democrats, whose symbol is the donkey, are more liberal, progressive, internationalist, and pacifist. The Republicans, whose symbol is the elephant, are more conservative and nationalist.



The flag of the United States is called the "Stars and Stripes"



The current President of the United States is Barack Obama – The copyright holder of this image (http://change.gov/newsroom/entry/new_official_portrait_released/), the Obama-Biden Transition project, releases it under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)

The President of the United States lives in the White House in Washington, D.C. – The copyright holder of this image, Matt H. Wade ("User:UpstateNYer" at Wikipedia), releases it under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)



THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION



A model of Watt's steam engine



James Watt



Coalbrookdale by Night (1801) by Philipp Jakob Loutherbourg (1740 – 1812)

When did the Industrial Revolution take place?

The Industrial Revolution took place between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century (c. 1750-1850).

Where did it occur?

It started in the United Kingdom – in that time the reigning monarch was King George III. Then it spread throughout Western Europe, North America, and Japan.

Why did it start in Great Britain and not on the continent of Europe?

It started there because Great Britain had valuable mineral resources: coal, copper, iron, salt, stone, and tin. Besides, Great Britain is an island, so it has got transport facilities – mainly the sea, but also its navigable rivers, with good harbours.

What are the most important inventions of this period?

The most important one was the steam engine, invented by James Watt in 1774. Others were the spinning jenny and the power loom.

What did mechanical inventions cause?

They caused, above all, the opening of factories in towns' outskirts. Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and Sheffield became the major industrial towns in Great Britain. A lot of farmers and peasants, who worked in the countryside, moved into these towns to work in the factories. So a new social class began to exist, along with farmers and nobles: the working class.

What did the Industrial Revolution mark?

The Industrial Revolution marked, according to some historians, the end of the Modern Age and the beginning of the Contemporary one. The United Kingdom transformed from a rural to an industrial country and soon became the richest country in the world.

SELINUNTE

Selinunte was a Greek colony in western Sicily. Now Selinunte is an archaeological area and its remains are located in three different areas: the acropolis, the eastern hill, and the sanctuary of Malophoros. The temples' names are letters because we do not know the gods the temples were dedicated to.

- ❖ The acropolis lies on a terrace (50 m above sea level), and is 500 m long and 300 m wide. It is surrounded by a wall and placed alongside two rivers: the Selinus (today called Modione) on the west and the Hypsas (today called Cottone) on the east. At these rivers' mouths there were two thriving ports, today covered with earth. In the acropolis there are five temples: O, A, B, C, and D. The temple C has been re-built.
- ❖ In the eastern hill there are three temples: E, F, and G. The temple E has been re-built.
- ❖ The sanctuary of Malophoros is a building dedicated to Demeter, the Greek goddess of agriculture.

Structure



Temple E



Temple G

Selinunte owe its name to the Selinus river; *Selinus* derives from *selinon*, term that identifies a plant which grows in that place.

728 BCE = Megara Nisea (Greece) founded a colony, Megara Hyblaea, in eastern Sicily.

650 BCE (according to Diodorus Siculus) or 628 BCE (according to Thucydides) = Settlers from Megara Hyblaea founded Selinunte in western Sicily.

409 BCE = Carthage defied Selinunte by a blitz war and won. After a nine-day siege, Selinunte lost its freedom.

250 BCE = Selinunte was definitely destroyed by Carthaginians who abandoned it.

241 BCE = At the end of the First Punic War, Selinunte became Roman.

Etymology

Timeline



Temple F with temple E on the background

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

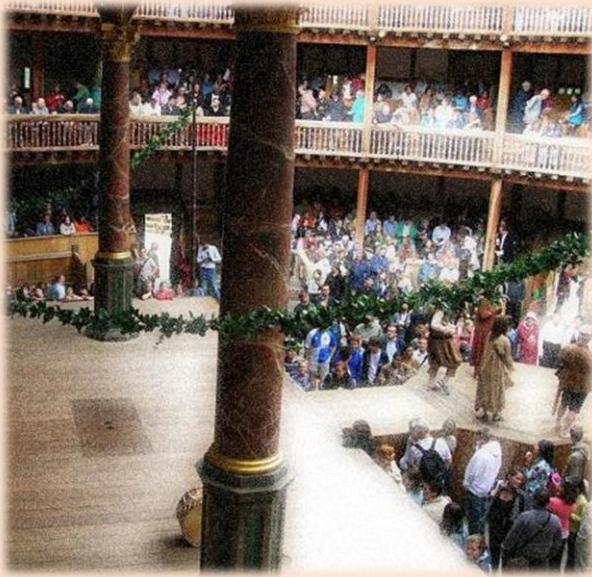
Biographical information



William Shakespeare (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1564 – Stratford-upon-Avon, 1616) was an English poet and playwright. He lived during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. His parents were John Shakespeare and Mary Arden. He married Anne Hathaway at the age of 18 and had three children with her. The following year, he went to London, where he probably worked as an actor. At his time, males played female characters. The theatre where his company played was *The Globe*, in London. He died at the age of 52.

← William Shakespeare

Literary works



William Shakespeare's literary career began by writing poetry. He wrote two poems – *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis* – and a lot of sonnets.

Then he continued by writing plays. He wrote comedies (such as *The Tempest* and *The Merchant of Venice*), tragedies (such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*), and historical plays (such as *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Julius Caesar*). Shakespeare is certainly the greatest English language dramatist, maybe the greatest the world has ever known.

← Shakespeare's Globe (a reconstruction of the Globe Theatre), located about 200 m away from the site of the original theatre

Quotes from *The Rape of Lucrece*

“Beauty itself doth of itself persuade
The eyes of men without orator.”

“Time’s glory is to command contending kings,
To unmask falsehood, and bring truth to light.”

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Comedies

The Tempest

YEAR OF WRITING: 1611
SETTING: An island in the Atlantic Ocean
PLOT: Prospero, Duke of Milan, meet his usurpers, who are shipwrecked on the island.

The Merchant of Venice

YEAR OF WRITING: 1592
SETTING: Venice
PLOT: Antonio, the merchant, borrows from Shylock for Bassanio, his friend.

Tragedies

Romeo and Juliet

YEAR OF WRITING: 1595
SETTING: Verona
PLOT: Romeo and Juliet fall in love, defying their families, but they die.

Hamlet

YEAR OF WRITING: 1601
SETTING: Denmark
PLOT: Hamlet wants to avenge his father's death.

Othello

YEAR OF WRITING: 1604
SETTING: Cyprus
PLOT: Othello jealously loves Desdemona and this love destroys him.

Historical plays

Anthony and Cleopatra

YEAR OF WRITING: 1606
SETTING: Egypt
PLOT: Augustus defeats Anthony and Cleopatra

Julius Caesar

YEAR OF WRITING: 1599
SETTING: Ancient Rome
PLOT: Julius Caesar is assassinated by conspirators, who then are defeated.



SLAVERY AND SEGREGATION

After the discovery of America (1492), British colonizers founded thirteen colonies in North America. In the northern ones the economy was based on industry; in the southern ones it was based on agriculture instead. European settlers bought fifteen millions of Black African slaves from tribal heads and brought them to the southern colonies. Most of them worked on the tobacco and cotton plantations and belonged to the plantation owners. Others worked to build the first railroad lines in North America. They had few rights.

"All Men are created equal"
United States Declaration of Independence, 4 July 1776

Slavery was the main cause of the American Civil War (1861-65), in which the northern States (the colonies had created a federation) defied the southern ones. The northern States, which were against slavery, won and Black slaves were freed in all the States of the federation.

Black slaves obtained freedom, but they had not the same rights as Whites. Blacks were segregated from Whites, especially in the southern States: They could not go to the same hospitals, restaurants, and theaters as Whites. In addition, Blacks could not vote.

In the 1950s and 1960s Blacks started an active movement to demand the end of discrimination. The leaders of the movement were Martin Luther King and John Fitzgerald Kennedy. They contributed to solve this problem with their lives and, we might add, with their death.

In fact, from the legal point of view, Blacks obtained the same rights as Whites. On the other hand, still today some White Americans do not think Blacks are equal to them.



African slaves on a plantation

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.
A DECLARATION
BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

WHEN in the Course of Human Events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the Separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent Respect for the Opinions of Mankind requires, that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain

unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. That to Secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men,

deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of their

The United States Declaration of Independence

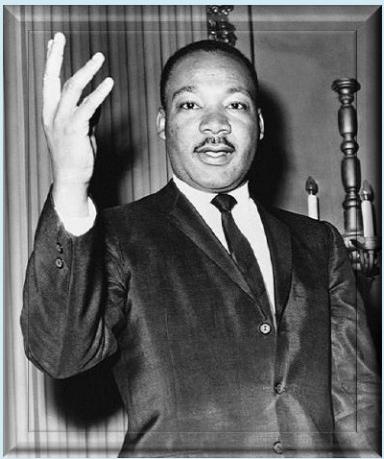


The Battle of Gettysburg during the Civil War



A sign for a "colored" waiting room

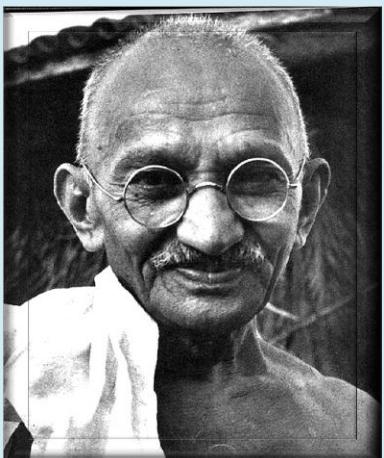
MARTIN LUTHER KING AND MOHANDAS K. GANDHI



Martin Luther King (Atlanta, Georgia, 15 January 1929 – Memphis, Tennessee, 4 April 1968) was an American civil rights leader. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent way to require equality and justice for Black Americans. He organized a quiet march in Washington, District of Columbia, on 28 August 1963, to protest against discrimination. In that occasion he delivered a speech in which he said several times "I have a dream" and which is commonly known by this title. Here are some phrases:

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream [...]. I have a dream that one day [...] the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood [...]. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

He was assassinated.



Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Porbandar, 2 October 1869 – New Delhi, 30 January 1948) was an Indian political leader. He also used non-violence, like Martin Luther King, but for a different purpose: He wanted to obtain the independence of his country. Thank to his work, India became independent from the United Kingdom in 1947. He was assassinated.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Second World War broke out on 3 September 1939, when the Allied powers (France and the United Kingdom at first) declared war on Germany. In the first phase of the war, Germany used the blitz war tactic, by which it defeated France. After this, Germany also attacked the United Kingdom by several air raids, but the Royal Air Force resisted and Germany lost more than three thousand airplanes. These two attacks let Americans think that the German military force could be dangerous to the United States.

The United States were already helping Britain when on 7 December 1941 the Japanese Air Force attacked the American naval base of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Consequently, the United States declared war on Japan and some days later the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan) declared war on the United States. The American forces fought in Africa, Europe, and the Pacific Ocean with the British ones.

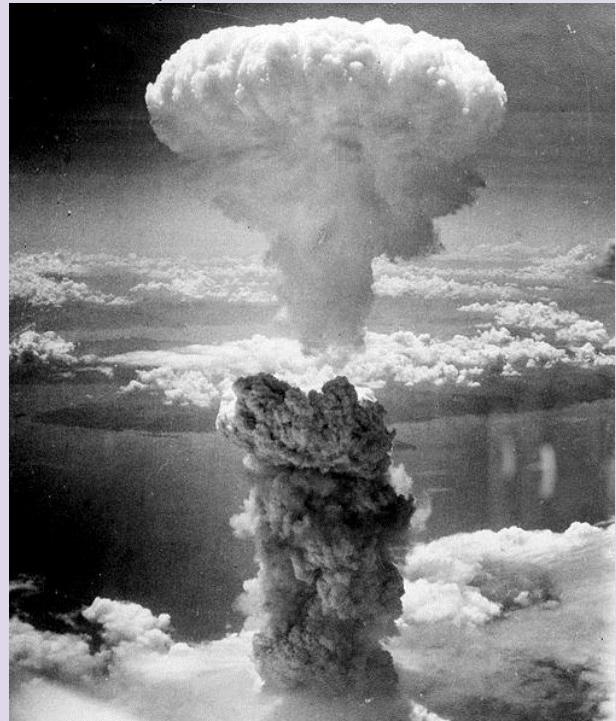
On 6 June 1944 (D-Day), the first contingents of an American and British invasion landed on the beaches of Normandy to free France. The Allied powers reached this goal on 25 August 1944. On 8 May 1945 Germany surrendered unconditionally. Three months later the United States dropped two atomic bombs on the Japanese towns of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Japan surrendered, too.



American soldiers approaching Omaha Beach, Normandy, on D-Day



An Allies' airplane



The atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki on 9 August 1945

MOTHER THERESA



← US President Ronald Reagan presents Mother Theresa with the Medal of Freedom at the White House in 1985

Mother Theresa from Calcutta, whose real name was Agnès Gonxha Bojaxhiu (Skopje, 26 August 1910 – Calcutta, 5 September 1997), was a nun who spent her life helping the poor people. She was born in Albania and went to a convent in Ireland at the age of 18. The next year she was sent to Calcutta, India, where she opened a center for poor people. In 1950 she founded a religious institution, the Congregation of the Nuns of the Mission of Charity, that spread throughout the world. She was awarded the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize. She gave a speech to the United Nations General Assembly in 1985; in the same year she opened a home for AIDS victims in New York. She died in India. During her funeral her coffin was placed on a gun carriage.



She travelled a lot during her life and she founded homes for the poor, sick, forsaken, and dying people in various places. She was received by the Pope several times. On 19 October 2003 Pope John Paul II proclaimed Mother Theresa from Calcutta blessed. Neither she nor her nuns were ever infected by patients with contagious illnesses.

← Mother Theresa at a 1986 pro-life meeting in Bonn, Germany – The copyright holder of this image, "User:Túrelio" at Wikipedia, releases it under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/de/>)



← A drawing of Mother Theresa – The copyright holder of this image, Dylan Gill ("User:Dylangill1974" at Wikipedia), releases it under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Today most of the countries in the Global North (North America, Europe, Japan, and Oceania) suffer from a lot of social ills: violence, crime, unemployment, alcoholism, and drug taking.

Unemployment

Unemployment increased in the last years in developed countries: Today about one person in four is out of work. The unemployment of young people who end studies is particularly serious because they feel frustrated and useless to society, so many of them start drinking alcohol and taking drugs.

Alcoholism

The only alcoholic drink which may have beneficial effects – on people who are more than 15 years old and if drunk in certain quantities – is wine. All other alcoholic drinks just damage human organism. Alcoholism causes road deaths, illnesses, family break-ups, inefficiency at work, and crime.

Drug taking

Drug taking is a very serious health problem and increased in the last years throughout western Europe. Unfortunately, the use of drugs is common with young people. Governments are trying solving this problem by running public service ads on mass media and by educating children in schools about the danger of drug taking.